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Message Text

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21
ACTION NEA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 H-01 INR-07 L-01 PM-03 PRS-01

SP-02 DODE-00 CIAE-00 SAB-01 SAM-01 NSC-05 NSCE-00

INRE-00 SSO-00 IO-03 /046 W
---------- 044819
O R 271034Z DEC 74
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5039
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG
CINCUSAFE LINDSEY AB GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 7463

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MILI, SY, IS, LE
SUBJ: SYRIAN MILITARY ALERT

REF: STATE 281750

1. WE BELIEVE THAT SYRIAN ALERT OF DECEMBER 23, AS WELL AS SPATE OF WAR RUMORS CIRCULATING IN ARAB WORLD, WAS BASED ON ARAB CONCERN THAT ISRAEL MAY CHOOSE TO LAUNCH PREEMPTIVE ATTACK. ISRAELI LEADERS TO SOME EXTENT HAVE FUELED THESE ANXIETIES BY THEIR REPEATED REFERENCES TO IDF PREPAREDNESS AND THEIR ASSESSMENT OF THE STRONG POSSIBILITY OF ANOTHER WAR IF NEGOTIATING PROCESS BREAKS DOWN. THERE IS ALSO SPECULATION IN ARAB WORLD THAT IDF WOULD STRIKE BEFORE EGYPTIAN ARMS BUILDUP IS COMPLETED.

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2. RECENT EMERGENCY APPOINTMENTS OF GENERALS SHARON AND TAL

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AS RESPECTIVELY COMMANDERS ON SOUTHERN AND NORTHERN FRONT
PROBABLY HAVE ALSO CONTRIBUTED TO IMPRESSION IN ARAB WORLD
THAT ISRAEL MAY BE PREPARING TO LAUNCH NEW ATTACK. IT SHOULD BE
NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT THESE APPOINTMENTS ARE TO BE OPERATIVE ONLY
IN CASE OF ACTUAL EMERGENCY, AND THAT AS OF NOW COMMAND OF THE
ARMY STILL RESIDES WITH THE TERRITORIAL COMMANDERS GENERALS
ADAM AND EITAN ON SOUTHERN AND NORTHERN FRONTS RESPECTIVELY.
WE SEE NOTHING OMINOUS IN TIMING OF SHARON-TAL EMERGENCY
APPOINTMENTS.

3. IDF WAS ON HIGH STATE OF ALERT INCLUDING LIMITED CALL-UP
OF RESERVES IN SECOND-HALF OF NOVEMBER, UNTIL SYRIA AGREED TO
RENEWAL OF UNDOF MANDATE. WE BELIEVE THAT IDF HAS AGAIN
GONE ON STATE OF ALERT ON BASIS OF REPORTS THAT SYRIAN AND EGYPTIAN
ARMIES HAVE BEEN PLACED ON ALERT. MOREOVER, THERE WAS ALSO
SOMEWHAT INCREASED AIR ACTIVITY IN ISRAEL PROPER AND IN
LEBANESE BORDER AREA AROUND DECEMBER 22. HOWEVER, THERE
WERE NO INDICATIONS REPEAT NO INDICATIONS OF IDF MOBILIZATION
IN PERIOD DECEMBER 20-23.

4. IN OUR VIEW, ISRAELI PREEMPTIVE ATTACK NOT LIKELY AT THIS TIME.
WE DO NOT SEE ISRAEL LAUCHING A PREMEDITATED ATTACK THROUGH
UNDOF OR UNEF, UNLESS FACED WITH UNMISTAKABLE EVIDENCE
THAT SYRIAN AND/OR EGYPTIAN ATTACK IS IMMINENT. IN ABSENCE
OF SUCH PROOF, AN ISRAELI ATTACK WOULD BE SEEN HERE AS
POLTICALLY COUNTE-PRODUCTIVE. RABIN IS PUBLICLY COMMITTED
TO PURSUING NEGOTIATING PROCESS, AND THIS IS CORNERSTONE
OF ISRAEL-US RELATIONS. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT RABIN AT THIS
TIME WOULD RISK JEOPARDIZING THIS RELATIONSHIP, OR
DESTROYING PROSPECTS FOR REACHING SECOND-STAGE POLITICAL
SETTLEMENT WITH EGYPT. WE BELIEVE THAT GOI WILL WANT TO
ASSESS OUTCOME OF BREZHNEV VISIT TO CAIRO BEFORE REACHING
DECISION ON NEXT POLITICAL OR MILITARY STEP.
KEATING

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